



**IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

**August 24, 2006**

**For immediate release**

- 1. Feedlot producers open house scheduled for Sept. 5**
- 2. Manure applicators should be sure they are certified**
- 3. Report manure spills, releases promptly**
- 4. Late summer fish kills a reminder of stream sensitivity**
- 5. Blue-green algae monitoring at Iowa beaches**
- 6. Funds for Targeted Watersheds Grant Program announced**

## **FEEDLOT PRODUCERS OPEN HOUSE SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 5**

Cattlemen and other open feedlot producers in eastern Iowa are invited to an open house to address environment and water quality issues on September 5.

The meeting will be held at the Jackson County fairgrounds in Maquoketa from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

“This meeting is designed to bring all the resources that can help producers evaluate their current operation and identify ways to improve their lots,” said John Lawrence, director of the Iowa Beef Center, Iowa State University. “From planning an open feedlot to funding improvements and maintenance tips, we should have something for everyone.”

Lawrence added that there is a lot of interest in expanding feedlots and in improving feedlot design to improve cattle performance and environmental protection. One of the sessions will feature success stories from other producers.

“The focus of the meeting is for producers to get answers to their questions, pick up ideas from other producers on successful lot designs and maintenance, and learn about resources available to help them make changes to their current operation,” said Evan Vermeer, vice president of the Iowa Cattlemen’s Association.

Producers are encouraged to attend a short opening session and registration, then rotate through the different stations designed to answer their questions about stewardship, management and technical issues.

"Producers may gain some new insights to control feedlot runoff," said Rick Martens, an environmental specialist with the Manchester DNR field office. "When I visit an open feedlot, there are often surprisingly easy fixes to chronic problems. If there are bigger challenges, then someone at this meeting can steer you to the help you need."

Iowa State University Extension, the Iowa Cattlemen's Association, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources are sponsoring the meeting.

Topics include site planning, technical advice and resources, feedlot design, operation and maintenance, funding and financing sources, producer success stories, expectations, the economic benefit of manure, and monitoring results/data.

**Media contact: Denise Schwab in the Iowa County Extension office, 319-642-5504.**

# # #

## **MANURE APPLICATORS SHOULD BE SURE THEY ARE CERTIFIED**

DES MOINES – Check your manure applicator's certificate and make sure it's current, recommends the DNR.

"With dry conditions prompting an earlier than usual harvest in some parts of the state, both private and commercial manure applicators need to get in and get certified if they haven't already done so," said Jeff Prier, coordinator of the DNR's manure applicator certification program.

A certified applicator is required by state law for all manure applied in Iowa from a confinement with more than 500 animal units, including manure brought in from out of state.

Private or confinement site manure applicators must be certified if they handle or apply manure from a confinement operation with more than 500 animal units. Commercial manure applicators must be certified, regardless of the source of the manure. They must also be associated with a commercial manure business.

Applicators can become certified through a video training session at their ISU county Extension office, or by passing a test at their regional DNR field office. In both cases, they need to call ahead and make an appointment.

"Allow two hours for confinement site training and three hours for commercial applicator training," said Prier.

He added that the fee structures and length of the certificate are also different.

“Confinement site applicators are certified for three years, but must take annual training or they will have to pass a make-up test before they can get another certificate,” Prier said. “After they pass the make-up test, the people who missed one of the three annual training sessions will also need to pass a second test or take training before they can renew their certificate.”

Commercial applicator certificates are good for one year, and expire on March 1 every year.

Training is free, but a certification fee and an annual education fee are charged for those applicators who want to be certified. Late fees are also charged for those who let their certificate lapse and want to renew after March 1.

“While some applicators indicate they don’t enjoy the training, others frankly admit that it’s helped them protect water quality, including coping with an emergency situation such as a spill,” Prier said.

For more information about certification and land application requirements, contact your local DNR field office or see the DNR Web site at <http://www.iowadnr.com/afo/appcert.html>. Information about certification training is also available at <http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/immag/mac.html>.

**Media Contact: Jeff Prier at (712) 262-4177.**

# # #

## **REPORT MANURE SPILLS, RELEASES PROMPTLY**

DES MOINES – If you have a manure spill or release, reporting it promptly can help you get the spill stopped more quickly. It’s also required by state law.

Spills and other manure releases must be reported to the DNR within six hours of when they occurred or when they were discovered.

“Despite everyone’s best efforts, accidents happen, and reporting a spill as soon as you discover it is to your advantage,” said Jeff Prier, coordinator of the DNR’s manure applicator certification program. “Many times we can help you think through all the possibilities and keep a spill from reaching Iowa’s streams and lakes.

“We have many field office people who have dealt with large spills,” he added. “They have the experience and training to help you figure out how to stop the spill and contain it.”

Prier added that following land application rules can help people avoid a release. Watching the weather and avoiding application when rain is forecast or soils are saturated can also help.

Manure releases should be reported to the local DNR field office or to the 24-hour spill line at (515) 281-8694.

DNR field offices include:

Manchester: (563) 927-2640

Mason City: (641) 424-4073

Spencer: (712) 262-4177

Atlantic: (712) 243-1934

Des Moines: (515) 725-0268

Washington: (319) 653-2135.

**Media Contact: Jeff Prier at (712) 262-4177.**

# # #

## **LATE SUMMER FISH KILLS A REMINDER OF STREAM SENSITIVITY**

DES MOINES — For many parts of Iowa, it's been a dry summer. Combine that with other current weather factors, and it doesn't take much to cause a fish kill.

During the warm weather months, dissolved oxygen levels can naturally decrease in our lakes and streams, and ammonia becomes more toxic in warmer water. If dissolved oxygen drops too low on its own, a natural fish kill can occur. However, increased water temperature, reduced dissolved oxygen levels and low flows, combined with any contaminated water discharging into streams or lakes, can result in a significant impact to fish and other aquatic life.

“When we get a heavy rain, manure, organic material and other pollutants can wash into streams if they're not properly stored,” said Mike Wade, an environmental specialist in the DNR Manchester field office. “With dissolved oxygen levels already low in the stream, the pollutants make levels drop even further, killing fish pretty quickly.”

Manure entering a stream raises ammonia levels and drops dissolved oxygen levels, which creates toxic conditions for fish and other aquatic life. Excess nutrients or organic matter, like milk, can also cause dissolved oxygen levels to drop.

“Producers need to work hard year-round to store their manure and fertilizers properly. But right now, with the low stream conditions and the heat, just a small release can lead to a fish kill,” Wade said.

A heavy rain can wash manure or other fertilizers, if not stored properly, over land into a stream or into a tile inlet. The manure then travels – sometimes miles – underground in a tile line before it enters a stream, like a recent Hardin County fish kill shows.

The DNR found several thousand minnows, shiners, darters, suckers and chubs along a 1.5-mile stretch of stream located between Radcliffe and Hubbard on Aug. 19. Most likely, a pollutant washed into a tile line during a heavy rainfall, and eventually landed in the stream, a tributary of Honey Creek.

However, the most recent rain in Hardin County occurred a week before a citizen reported the fish kill to the DNR. Because so much time had passed between the fish kill and its discovery, the DNR was unable to find a source of the fish kill.

“That’s why we need Iowans to quickly report fish kills,” Wade said. “It allows us to get out in the field to find the source of pollution and work to possibly stop it.”

Fish kills can be reported to your local DNR field office within normal business hours. Outside of normal business hours, report fish kills to the DNR’s 24-hour spill hotline at (515) 281-8694. DNR field offices include:

Manchester: (563) 927-2640  
Mason City: (641) 424-4073  
Spencer: (712) 262-4177  
Atlantic: (712) 243-1934  
Des Moines: (515) 725-0268  
Washington: (319) 653-2135

**MEDIA CONTACT: Mike Wade at (563) 927-2640.**

# # #

## **BLUE-GREEN ALGAE MONITORING AT IOWA BEACHES**

**NOTE TO EDITORS AND NEWS DIRECTORS: The following is a joint press release from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Iowa Department of Public Health.**

DES MOINES — Throughout the summer of 2006, the Iowa Departments of Natural Resources (DNR) and Public Health (IDPH) have been monitoring Iowa’s 37 state-owned beaches for the presence of blue-green algae and toxins that this algae may produce.

With recent changing weather conditions, blooms of blue-green algae have become more common.

In order to provide the public with the most up-to-date information, updates are being made available to the public through the DNR’s website and through the Iowa Beach

Monitoring Hotline as soon as sample results are available. For the latest information regarding any advisories, go to [www.iowadnr.com](http://www.iowadnr.com) and click on “Beach Monitoring” or call 319-353-2613.

“Blue-green algae may be similar in appearance to regular green algae observed frequently in Iowa water bodies,” said Eric O'Brien, coordinator of the DNR Beach Monitoring Program. “The appearance can be a bright-green or aqua color, but may also appear reddish-brown during some parts of its life cycle. It may occur with scum or foam, but is most common as a green to aqua colored mat floating on the water’s surface.”

Iowans should take precautions to avoid health risks associated with blue-green algal toxins, according to IDPH.

“In order to minimize risks associated with blue-green algal toxins, beachgoers should avoid direct contact with water that appears to have a bloom. The main risk to humans is skin irritations and rashes, but if the water is swallowed or airborne droplets are inhaled during swimming, symptoms could be worse,” said Tom Newton, IDPH environmental health division director.

Newton added that animals and pets ingesting water containing blue-green algae could be particularly susceptible. It is advised to keep pets away from water that appears to have a blue-green algae bloom.

To minimize the chance of illness to you and your pets in waters potentially containing blue-green algae:

- Do not ingest the water
- Wash thoroughly after contact with the water
- Avoid green/aqua colored floating mats
- Do not let pets ingest or swim in the water

Blue-green algae does not impact the quality of fish fillets. Therefore the normal consumption of fish fillets is not impacted; however, internal fish organs should not be eaten as toxins created by the algae can accumulate in their organs.

In the event that any beach has high readings of blue-green algae at the beach, swimming advisories will be posted at the entryways to the public beach. Additional monitoring will be conducted to assess the most recent conditions, while swimming advisories will remain in effect until conditions return to normal.

**For more information, contact Eric O’Brien (monitoring and results) at (319) 560-6128 or Tom Newton (health issues) at (515) 281-5099.**

###

**FUNDS FOR TARGETED WATERSHEDS GRANT PROGRAM  
ANNOUNCED**

DES MOINES — Governor Tom Vilsack and DNR Director Jeff Vonk announced today that eligible watersheds in Iowa may qualify for federal funds under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Targeted Watersheds Grant Program.

Under this program, \$16 million is available to support the protection and restoration of the country's water resources through a holistic watershed approach. This program is designed to encourage successful community-based approaches and techniques to protect water resources throughout the country. Governor Vilsack can nominate an unlimited number of meritorious projects for funding consideration by EPA. Successful applicants will be eligible for funding of \$600,000 to \$900,000.

Several Iowa projects have received funding under this program in recent years. In 2003, the Rathbun Land and Water Alliance was awarded \$600,000 to support a comprehensive watershed project to protect and improve water quality in Lake Rathbun. In 2004, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and Iowa State University were awarded \$1 million to carry out an integrated drainage tile management-wetlands project, in cooperation with three drainage districts in Palo Alto and Pocahontas counties.

Both Vilsack and Vonk said the grant program offers excellent opportunities for local communities looking to improve water quality.

"Water quality is a statewide issue, but the most successful efforts we see in improving water quality start at the local level," said Vilsack. "When local citizens care enough about water quality to become active, the work gets done and having access to the federal dollars is a real shot in the arm for transforming interest and ideas into action and results."

Vonk said an increasing number of communities are realizing the importance natural resources and outdoor recreation amenities play in the economic vitality of their regions.

"By investing in water quality, we support wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation and ultimately, our economy. We also make Iowa a great place to live, work and raise a family. Communities that understand these concepts and lead the effort are the ones that will have best positioned themselves for a more prosperous future," said Vonk.

DNR will solicit applications for the program and provide recommendations to the Governor regarding projects to be submitted for funding consideration. In accordance with EPA guidance, applications will be evaluated upon their anticipated water quality benefits, their breadth of local support, their level of innovative environmental problem-solving, and their compatibility with other federal and state efforts.

To be considered, applications must be received by the DNR no later than Oct. 25, 2006. Governor Vilsack will submit Iowa's nominations to EPA, with final selections being determined by EPA.

Additional details on how to apply for the Targeted Watersheds Grant Program, including eligibility requirements and where to send your application, can be found at [www.iowadnr.com/water/nonpoint/watershed.html](http://www.iowadnr.com/water/nonpoint/watershed.html). Questions can also be directed to: Ubbo Agena, Nonpoint Program Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources (phone 515-281-6402, email: [ubbo.agena@dnr.state.ia.us](mailto:ubbo.agena@dnr.state.ia.us)) or Becky Schwiete, Environmental Specialist Sr. Iowa Department of Natural Resources (phone 515-242-6196, email: [rebecca.schwiete@dnr.state.ia.us](mailto:rebecca.schwiete@dnr.state.ia.us))